CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN ADVERSE NEWS SITUATIONS

The Navy is without a doubt a news maker, and with little question the news it makes is sometimes adverse in nature. When a fire rages aboard an aircraft carrier and there are mounting casualties or when a recruit dies of injuries received during training, the PAO and senior journalist find themselves in the middle of a news story. These news incidents contain the elements of a good news story—immediacy, consequence, drama, conflict and emotion. People are interested in these stories and may often be directly affected by them.

The events that affect the Navy and its personnel are generally matters the public has an inherent right to know, whether the news is good or bad. Principally, this right can be abridged in very few cases if security is involved. The fact that bad news is embarrassing does not mean we should not release it, because this fact does not curtail the public's right to know. The stories concerning this nation's military establishment and the lives and welfare of U.S. fighting forces must be told.

Another reason to tell these stories is a purely practical one in that bad news cannot be suppressed. Attempts to hide bad news make the Navy look dishonest because guesswork is stimulated. This is often worse than the truth and the agony is prolonged. Any refusal by the Navy to cooperate with the news media, for whatever reason, causes speculation, rumor and conjecture to replace the truth and facts of a situation. This is especially true in an emergency where things are confusing anyway.

Even though there are effective methods of coping with the public affairs problems that accompany nearly every accident, public affairs personnel often make mistakes in handling the news aspects of disasters.

Naturally, no two bad news situations are identical, but public affairs practitioners can apply certain principles in releasing information to the public. Therefore, this chapter provides guidance to the senior journalist to successfully handle public affairs in major peacetime naval (and increasingly joint) disaster situations.

POLICY GUIDANCE FOR DISASTERS

Learning Objective: Detail the basic disaster policy guidance of the DoD and Navy.

The DoD formulates all basic policy regarding the release of disaster information by the armed services. The individual services, in turn, disseminate their own policy instructions according to the basic DoD directives. Neither the DoD nor any of the other armed services issues a master disaster plan. Since the military services, individually and collectively, are subject to the many types of natural and man-made disasters, the lack of a master plan is understandable. The Atomic Energy Commission and NASA, for instance, operate in limited areas of specialized activities with predictable accident situations. The Navy can, by the same token, anticipate certain disasters peculiar to specialized operations. Individual naval commands, bases, installations, fleets, and so forth, reissue policy guidance best suited to their individual needs and circumstances based on these basic service guides.

Several basic DoD directives exist on individual service guidance in the area of disaster information. Implementation instructions are contained in *PA Regs*.

DEFINITION OF DISASTERS

Learning Objective: *Identify and define the different* types of disasters.

The concept of disaster varies with the kind and degree of involvement of the persons or groups concerned. The word *disaster* signifies one thing to the family or community involved, another to disaster research science and still something else to the governmental agency or voluntary relief organization charged with relief and rehabilitation measures. Webster defines disaster as "a sudden and extraordinary misfortune; a calamity." One sophisticated definition states that disaster is "a disruption in the normal flow of energy that is uncontrolled."

Disasters, regardless of how or by whom defined, have certain common attributes. They include injury, suffering or death for several people and damage or destruction to possessions and property. According to their origins, peacetime disasters are of two main types: natural and man-made.

There is no official military definition for military or naval disasters. However, any definition of peacetime naval disasters would only differ from those previously listed in the application of terms to naval personnel, equipment or installations. In terms of this chapter, remember that naval disasters differ in the scope of public interest and concern. A naval disaster in any locale provokes the interest of the entire country since Navy personnel come from all corners of the United States. A Navy ship involved in a collision, for instance, may very well have representatives from all 50 states in its crew.

DESCRIPTIVE DIFFERENCES

In addition to the two general classes of disasters, natural and man-made, there are other descriptive differences that are helpful to consider.

Disasters differ in the following ways:

- Degree of predictability
- Degree of probability
- Degree of controllability
- Nature of the precipitating agent
- Origin
- Speed of onset
- Scope
- Destructive effects on people and physical objects

CATEGORIZING DISASTERS

There is no commonly accepted way of categorizing disasters beyond the two previously mentioned divisions. For operational purposes, however, the Red Cross recognizes the following types:

- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Other windstorms
- Floods
- All other storms (hailstorms, snowstorms, etc.)

- Explosions
- Fires
- Wrecks (train, ship, airplane, etc.)

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST DISASTERS

Learning Objective: Analyze the public affairs lessons learned from specific past naval/natural disasters.

It is helpful to detail successes in the handling of public affairs in past naval/natural disasters. It is probably more important, however, to scrutinize the things that could have been done better. This section does both.

The gauge of success or failure is difficult to measure. In the Navy, success is competence in carrying out the assigned mission, performing according to rank or rate and responsibility, reflecting one's own personal experience and upholding and maintaining the traditions of the naval service.

Contemplating a major disaster is not a pleasant task. The Navy's operational forces have learned that constant training to meet a national emergency, peace-keeping action or disaster situation have paid handsome dividends when the real event occurred. The public affairs staff must be ready when a disaster strikes. A disaster plan is meaningless if the public affairs staff is unfamiliar with it or cannot put it into operation. All concerned should have a thorough knowledge of the disaster plan and be able to put it into effect. Each individual should know his duties and responsibilities, such as where he goes, what he may be expected to do, and his own particular part in the overall public affairs operation. It would be useful for the public affairs staff to run drills during off-duty hours to determine how long it would take to man the office fully in a disaster situation. You should periodically put the disaster plan in full operation to find out how long it takes to get out a news release, radio tape or videotape.

The following disaster cases were originally published in the *Public Affairs Communicator*. More detailed case studies on these and other disasters are available from the CHINFO Plans and Policy Division.

USS IOWA

Lt. Russ Greer (CINCLANTFLT PAO) details the public affairs response to the USS *Iowa* tragedy in 1989 as follows:

The explosion and fire that killed 47 sailors aboard the USS *Iowa* (BB 61) (fig. 2-1) on the morning of April 19, 1989, produced a classic crisis for Navy public affairs.

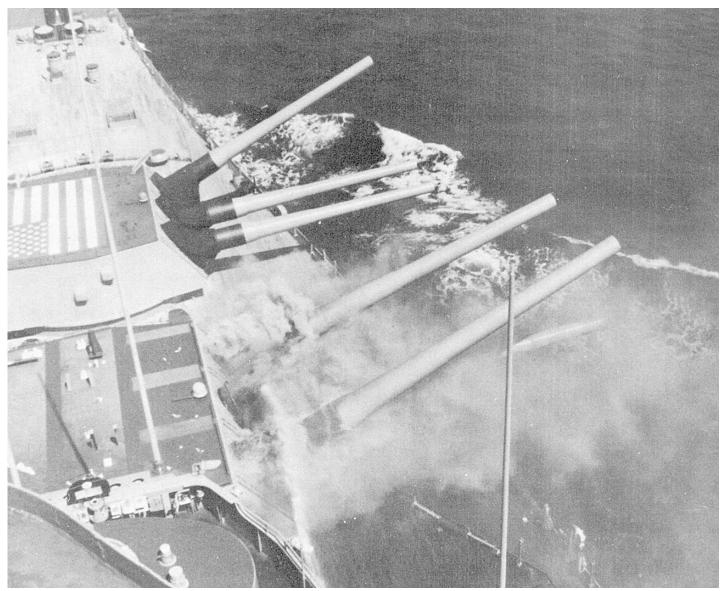
In the confusion of the first reports, there was immense pressure from the media, the public and Congress to learn the names of the dead and injured. Next came the return of the ship itself. A memorial service followed, attended by President Bush, and then the investigation began with extensive speculation

in the media about the cause of the tragedy.

For public affairs professionals, the pattern of the crisis has become all too familiar in recent years with the USS *Stark*, USS *Samuel B. Roberts*, USS *Bonefish* and USS *Vincennes* incidents providing textbook paradigms.

The lessons learned from the USS *Iowa* disaster include the following:

• Have a written public affairs emergency reaction plan and practice it. The plan should deal chiefly with the physical tools you need to handle a crisis, such as telephones, extra personnel, transportation, communications, and so forth.



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Figure 2-1.—USS Iowa (BB 61) explosion and fire, April 19, 1989. (Official U.S. Navy photograph by Lt. Thomas Jarrell)

Identify a command information bureau (CIB) site ahead of time. More than 600 media, including the White House press corps, gathered in Norfolk to cover the *Iowa's* story on short notice. The logistics alone of transporting that many people is staggering, even with time for planning.

- Early in the crisis, **identify a clear chain of command,** make specific personal assignments (media officer, administration officer, drivers, etc.) and create planning groups for specific events, such as *Iowa's* return and the memorial service. Let these groups focus ahead on the details for the events while the key decision makers remain free.
- Identify goals immediately. In Norfolk, *Iowa*'s home port, there were two key Atlantic Fleet public affairs goals: to inform the families and protect them from unwanted media intrusion and to accommodate the overwhelming media interest in the explosion, the ship and the families.
- Know how to communicate with the Navy families. The Norfolk Family Services Center and Commander, Naval Base Norfolk, activated their crisis response plan immediately after the explosion and offered a central gathering place for families at the Norfolk Naval Base gymnasium for counseling and information. Unfortunately, the mechanism for getting information to the families before they see it in the media is weak. Family members who are confused or scattered away from fleet locations or perhaps do not trust or understand the Navy follow news reports for the latest information. Official information is filtered in the media and mixed with speculation, misinformation and inaccuracies.

There is no way to solve this problem completely. Improvements can be made in the flow of information between fleet commands and the ombudsman and family services center, but the media will always play a key internal information role. It becomes especially important in these crises to get the most complete and accurate facts as quickly as possible to the news media and to correct wrong stories as they appear. This implies continual monitoring of coverage.

Carefully plan the physical arrangements for the media at event sites and methods to keep the media informed. When you make an honest attempt to bring the story to the media, it reduces speculation. An official spokesman must be established as the best source of breaking news. If the press has the available facts, they are less likely to speculate, to go to "think tank experts" and to hound the families. The first information about the explosion was released to the press almost immediately in Norfolk. The Atlantic Fleet sent a public affairs assistance team to the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base in Puerto Rico within six hours of the explosion and conducted a media availability with the 2nd Fleet Commander, Vice Adm. Jerry Johnson, in Puerto Rico less than 24 hours after the explosion. The draw of the press conference permitted the ship to remain relatively undisturbed off Roosevelt Roads while the remains were transferred ashore by helicopter. The media were then taken to the flight line to observe the flag-draped caskets being escorted aboard a C-5 by an honor guard.

It took *Iowa* five days to return to Norfolk after the explosion. The CIB arranged a media availability aboard *Iowa*'s sister ship, the battleship USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64), to give reporters an opportunity to see the turret where the fire and explosion occurred. This also enabled the media to talk to battleship sailors about the routine operation of the gun for perspective and background.

On the day of the *Iowa's* return, approximately 500 media were roped into an area at the end of the pier, photographing the grim arrival from flatbed trucks without interfering with the homecoming.

At the memorial service the next day, the presence of the White House press corps swelled the total number of media attending to more than 600, in an aircraft hangar already crowded with more than 5,000 people. Bleachers in the hangar, careful selection of pool locations for cutaways and separation of the media from the crew and more than 100 family members helped give the crew members and families privacy, while giving the press as many opportunities as possible to cover the ceremony.

Most of the needs of the media and the needs of the families were met during the *lowa* crisis, but there is always room for improvement. The reality of the *lowa* crisis is that any command, anywhere in the world, can be forced to deal with a similar crisis without notice. The biggest lesson learned is that no one can plan or train enough for that day.

USS MIDWAY

Lt. j.g. Rich Chao, the PAO of the USS Midway (CV 41), chronicles the public affairs aspects of the ship's 1990 fire as follows:

June 20, 1990, was a day I had to juggle feathers in a sudden storm. Two explosions and a fire occurred while the USS *Midway* (fig. 2-2) conducted routine flight operations approximately 125 nautical miles northeast of Yokosuka, Japan. Three crew members died and eight others were seriously injured in the line of duty. All 11 crewmen belonged to an elite fire-fighting team known as the "Flying Squad."

It was not planned as a soporific day for the Midway public affairs staff anyway. After weeks of coordination, we spent the morning doublechecking the details of an important VIP embark that included a senior Japanese Defense Agency official and a Japanese vice admiral. A 1MC announcement preceded by rapid bells broke my train of thought.

"Smoke, smoke, smoke. . . I have a report of white smoke in compartment . . . away the Flying Squad away," came across the 1MC. JO1 Brady Bautch began logging a sequence of events as we always do for all damage control announcements. A similar scenario happened during a previous media embark and we expected everything would



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Figure 2-2.—USS Midway (CV 41). (Official U.S. Navy photograph by PH2 Rodney C. Orallo)

return to normal before the VIPs arrived, like the last time, The next series of 1MC announcements shattered that wish.

"All repair division and damage control personnel not on watch muster abreast elevator two," announced the 1MC. Everyone in the public affairs office froze and strained to catch every word.

"Medical emergency, medical emergency in compartment. . . away the medical team away," shouted the 1MC. "All engineering personnel not on watch muster abreast elevator two."

Right away, the butterfly in my stomach stood up. My gut feeling told me something was wrong, very wrong or else damage control central would not muster all engineering personnel. JO3 Greg Traweek, who was working on the mess decks, burst into the office and reported an explosion. Bautch immediately called up the prepared adverse news release format in the computer.

I decided to gather first-hand information. Unable to reach the scene of the explosion because of fire boundaries, I went aft toward the medical department. Before reaching medical, I found the aft mess deck lined with burned crewmen and corpsmen racing to attend the injured.

I knew I had to take quick decisive action. Remembering my *PA Regs* training, I had one hour to send the initial press release. I realized the clock was ticking and the VIPs were still inbound.

The C-23 carrying the VIPs escorted by Cmdr. Mark Stun, the Commander Naval Forces Japan PAO, landed. Receiving the VIPs and improvising a new plan for them in flag country diverted my attention. The initial press release was still waiting for me.

The *Midway* public affairs staff pieced together the first press release from various sources. JOC Jim O'Leary phoned in after talking to damage control personnel near the scene. Traweek relayed the status of the injured from the aft mess deck. I located *Midway*'s position in relation to Yokosuka from the flag watch officer and Bautch strung all the pieces together.

The crisis management marathon was just beginning. As soon as the initial press release was out, Bautch and I began preparing for the follow-up releases. We wanted to determine the number of injured and the status of the fire. But again, the VIPs

onboard prevented me from concentrating on the press release.

While the office was buzzing with activity, O'Leary directed JO3 Kevin Stephens and JOSN Lee Gobin to videotape the mass casualties on the mess deck, the medical evacuation of injured crewmen and the transport of deceased crew members to a helicopter. The footage was used by Navy News This Week and will also be used as a training aid for Navy medical personnel.

Bautch and I continued to hunt down new information for follow-up releases. By this time, we learned to compare notes with the intelligence officers who were writing the OPREP-3s. Bautch also established direct contact with the chief engineer and damage control assistant to streamline information gathering. In between follow-up releases, we drafted the opening statement and composed a list of questions and answers for the media availability.

About 10:30 a.m. the second day, Cdr. Mark Newhart, the Seventh Fleet PAO, arrived by helicopter about four hours before the ship returned to Yokosuka. The task at hand was to organize the media availability.

When *Midway* entered Yokosuka Harbor, 12 Japanese media helicopters flew in circles and hovered about 150 feet above the flight deck. Three bus loads of reporters were waiting on the pier. About 30 minutes after *Midway* cast its first line, more than 100 international print and electronic journalists charged over the brow to cover the media availability of COMCARGRUFIVE and the CO.

A major challenge for the PAO handling an emergency is getting accurate information quickly. Rumors abound amid confusion. I always gathered or double-checked information with the experts. The PAO onboard an aircraft carrier is like a reporter in a city under an airport. The fire department and hospital will not call the reporter in an emergency. The reporter has to go to the fire department and hospital. While being the inquisitive reporter, I also thought about how to gather the facts without impeding the fire-fighting and lifesaving activities.

Another major challenge was running press releases up and down the chop chain in a timely fashion. The geographic separation between the bridge (CO and XO) and flag country (admiral and chief of staff) made this process time consuming. The highly perishable information quickly becomes

dated when events unfold quickly; as time went on, the chop chain grew longer as more people demanded to have a chop.

I strongly urge all PAOs to know your ship, the key players on your ship and other PAOs in the area. Most important, know how to optimize your staff or else no one will help you "juggle the feathers in a sudden storm."

The things that went well included the following:

- We gained instant credibility by inviting the media on board for a highly effective media availability within 30 minutes of returning to Yokosuka.
- The prepared adverse news release format was entered in the computer before getting under way.
- An accurate sequence of events was kept and double-checked against the damage control central log before it was included in the press kit.
- We had enough command "welcome aboard" pamphlets, 5- by 7-inch black-and-white photos of the ship, biographies and pictures of the CO and embarked admiral for the press kits.
- After the initial confusion, we maintained a close, working relationship with the intelligence officers who wrote OPREP-3s.
- We recorded almost two hours of raw video footage. Video footage of the damaged spaces was used by two investigative boards and the Naval Investigative Service. The footage of the mass casualties and Medevac was used by "Navy News This Week" and will be used by medical personnel for training.
- Damage control diagrams that highlight the damaged spaces and their locations were reproduced for visual presentation. The large diagrams were displayed on an easel and copies were included in the press kits.
- A Japanese interpreter from COMNAV-FORJAPAN enhanced communications at the bilingual media availability.
- All casualties were flown off the ship before arrival in Yokosuka.

The lessons learned from the USS *Midway* disaster included the following:

- Make sure all press releases are sent via OP-Immediate.
- Make sure the XO, CO, chief of staff of the embarked flag staff and admiral approve the message.
- Make sure press releases are not sent before the OPREP-3s.
- Include only biographies of the speakers at the media availability in the press kits.
- Establish contacts and good relations with operations and intelligence personnel before an incident takes place.

HURRICANE HUGO

Lt. Cmdr. John Tull of the Navy Office of Information (NAVINFO) New England gives the following account of the public affairs actions taken after Hurricane Hugo:

"Hugo Who?" is a popular expression in Charleston, South Carolina, now that recovery and restoration efforts are gradually reestablishing normal lifestyles, but make no mistake about it: During the night of September 21, 1989, and extending into the early morning hours of September 22, Hurricane Hugo had the undivided attention a Category Five hurricane demands.

For the Navy in Charleston, Hugo's impact was described as "devastating," which in terms of facilities, equipment and water damage—initially estimated at \$250 million—it was. However, it could have been far worse in terms of loss of life and injuries. Fortunately, no fatalities or serious injuries involving active-duty forces or their families occurred during the storm.

On the public affairs front, response to Hugo-related needs provided some valuable learning experiences for PAOs. From those experiences came various observations and lessons learned, including the following:

• Navy Family Information Center and Hot Line-Establishment of a Navy Family Information Center and Hot Line at the Charleston Naval Hospital on September 23 proved very useful in recovery efforts by providing information on services available, getting tiger teams to families in need, disseminating information on the return of ships that sortied and often by having an understanding person available to talk to.

• The center was established with watch standers from the submarine, surface and shore communities, who had direct access to the Naval Base Operations Center and to submarine group and destroyer squadron operations centers. The center was particularly important in relaying return data for ships that sortied, since some ombudsmen had to evacuate and others had their homes badly damaged, telephone lines knocked out, and so forth.

In this regard the briefing of ombudsmen at training academy sessions, predeployment briefings and other forums on leaving backup names and telephone numbers with the family service center or squadron is highly recommended. Public affairs offices and other organizations can then obtain an updated list just before the storm so that such information could be made readily available for information center use.

• The Military Affiliated Radio System (MARS)—In talking to ship COs who sortied to avoid the storm, several praised the usefulness of MARS in making telephone patches ashore to ombudsmen, CO and XO spouses to determine the status of crew members' families. Many said they knew the status of most families within 24 to 48 hours after the storm hit.

This was particularly significant because when ships were diverted to alternate ports (such as Mayport) pending inspection and opening of the channel, COs immediately dispatched the crewmen home who had their homes destroyed. The ships that fared the best had worked out many details before departure; many had not.

The role that MARS played in the information flow was significant and indirectly impacted the Hot Line call load. MARS and its role in such situations should be highlighted to sortied ships and their direct support network and be considered a definite factor in the information flow by local public affairs personnel. MARS was also used in a similar fashion for providing information to Charleston-based ships overseas that heard the reports of "total devastation, death and destruction." Later reports from overseas units indicated MARS connections were greatly appreciated and eased the minds of worried crewmen.

• Loss of local television and radio stations—As a result of the storm, all local media outlets eventually went off the air. Restoring communications with local media under these circumstances was a major task since telephone lines were lost and some stations moved to remote transmitter lines.

It is recommended that stations be contacted beforehand, perhaps during the same 72-hour time frame that ship sortie is normally addressed, and ask for transmitter site telephone numbers and secondary numbers. After the storm, several radio stations in less severely damaged areas in South Carolina, such as Port Royal, as well as in neighboring states (Jacksonville, Fla. and Raleigh, N.C.), voluntarily picked up the information load and relayed a great deal of South Carolina information.

Monitoring those stations and using them to provide emergency service information definitely helped in getting the word out. As a result, stations that participated were placed on local media lists or in contingency folders for easy reference if the need arose again. Also a battery-powered, black and white, dual-purpose television/radio maintained in the PAO emergency "fly-away" box provided the primary means of monitoring various broadcasts and is considered to be an essential piece of equipment in such situations.

These items represent only a sketch of what was gained in this most extraordinary circumstance. Other lessons learned will certainly be forthcoming as other ramifications of Hurricane Hugo are discovered.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Learning Objective: Outline the planning and administrative procedures to follow to ensure naval disaster preparedness.

When faced with an adverse news situation, the first questions you must ask yourself are, What is my mission? and What am I trying to accomplish? What is really going on? Generally, the first word passed is usually wrong. A good relationship among the public affairs, intelligence and operations staffs should be in place before any disaster occurs, or the PAO folks will be uninformed of crucial information.

One of the first steps you should take to help answer these questions is to establish objectives. As elementary or as obvious as this action may be, it is one of the first things frequently forgotten in a disaster situation. For this reason, it is important that you know in advance what your command's public affairs objectives are in the face of bad news.

OBJECTIVES

The following is a list of specific public affairs objectives when dealing with an adverse news situation:

- Retain public confidence in the Navy. When something goes wrong in the Navy, the competence of naval personnel or the value of naval equipment may be called into question. It is your job to minimize doubts by telling the truth, give full and accurate information and report what corrective actions, if any, are being taken. You may be able to neutralize an adverse story with this strategy, and increased public confidence may result if you do your job well.
- Preserve good media and community relations. Treat media representatives as you would like to be treated: honestly and fairly. Release all information that can be released. If you cover up certain facts related to an adverse news stay, you can be sure the ill will that arises when the coverup is discovered will follow you. Frankness and honesty are always respected. The results may be seen in the unbiased reporting of adverse news stories.
- Protect and promote the welfare of military personnel and their families. While you have an obligation to respond to the public's right to know, you must also remember that naval personnel and their families have a right to privacy that must be respected. This becomes most apparent when you deal with fatalities and notification of next of kin.

In addition to these objectives, the public affairs office has certain immediate and continuing responsibilities in a disaster situation. They are listed as follows:

- To safeguard classified information and material
- To provide the news media with maximum possible access to the accident scene and a continuous flow of information regarding the disaster
- To release the names of casualties as soon as current policy permits

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PLANS

To best meet the daily commitments and fulfill the public affairs responsibilities in a disaster situation, you must prepare two disaster plans. The **command plan** is issued by the command in the form of an official directive or appended to any master disaster plan as a public affairs annex. It promulgates broad information policies and designates overall responsibilities to staff departments or individual staff billets relative to the handling of public affairs in a disaster.

In addition, write an **office plan** outlining the detailed actions to be taken by the PAO and his staff to fulfill their designated responsibilities.

Command Plan

The command plan shown in figure 2-3 provides a solid base for the public affairs staff in a disaster. By being promulgated as a directive, the plan is officially sanctioned by the officer in command. It assures everybody's cooperation in the command and specifically outlines the command's objectives and the responsibilities of the public affairs staff and other departments in the command. In the absence of the PAO, it also serves as a general guide to the officer appointed to take his place.

The command plan shown might contain other details according to the specific requirements of the individual command. In the case of a ship, for instance, specific responsibilities might be delegated to the gunnery officer, nuclear weapons officer, engineering officer, and so forth. Naval bases and installations may be engaged in specialized activities, such as the testing of new equipment, training of fleet personnel or support of fleet units. In each case, alter the command plan to encompass the disaster contingencies anticipated as a result of the specialized activities of the individual commands. Another example of a disaster public affairs plan (called an adverse incident plan) appears in Appendix IV of this manual.

Office Plan

For a public affairs staff to meet and fulfill its responsibilities in a disaster situation successfully, you must prepare an office plan that outlines the specific actions for the PAO and his staff to take. To this plan, the specialized information, checkoff lists, telephone lists and the like are to be appended, which will help the public affairs staff respond quickly and efficiently should a disaster strike.

The office plan can be less formal than the command plan. It might be promulgated as an interoffice memorandum, such as the one shown in figure 2-4.

BASE DIRECTIVE 5700.1

From: Commanding Officer
To: Distribution List

Subj: PUBLIC AFFAIRS DISASTER PLAN

Ref: (a) Department of the Navy Public Affairs Policy and Regulations

(b) Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual

1. <u>Purpose</u>. To promulgate policy and establish responsibilities for the efficient handling and release of information concerning base personnel and units involved in a disaster.

2. Policy.

- a. The basic public affairs policy of the Navy as promulgated by reference (a) is to keep the public informed of the activities of the Navy as compatible with military security. Officers in command are responsible for the implementation of the public affairs policies and programs of the Department of the Navy and for the conduct of public affairs within their commands.
- b. The timely release of unclassified information and other actions necessary to keep the public informed are mandatory in the event of any naval disaster occurring on this base.
- 3. <u>Definition</u>. Disaster in the context of this directive is considered to be any naturally caused or man-made incident which:
- a. Causes personnel casualties, whether to military or civilian personnel, which results in death, being placed in a "missing" status or injuries serious enough to require hospitalization.
 - b. Causes major damage or destruction to material.
 - c. Could become the subject of news media interest.
- 4. Responsibilities. In support of the information policies of this command, the following specific responsibilities are delegated and assigned in the event of a disaster:

Figure 2-3.—Sample command public affairs disaster plan.

a. Public Affairs Officer. The public affairs officer (PAO) is responsible to the commanding officer for all public affairs aspects of the disaster, including the release of pertinent information, liaison with news media representatives and liaison with civilian and military families who approach the base in search of information. He will take the necessary actions to keep the commanding officer and higher authorities continually informed concerning the informational aspects of the disaster. In the event that civilian relief organizations are needed to assist in relief operations, he will establish and maintain liaison with the public affairs representatives of those organizations.

The PAO will be the sole releasing authority for all information and as such will coordinate all public affairs inputs to reports relative to the disaster. Time and physical circumstances permitting, he will clear all major announcements or releases of information before public dissemination with the commanding officer.

- b. Security Officer. The base security officer will ascertain at the earliest possible moment the security implications of the disaster relative to the release of information and access of reporters to the scene and communicate his findings to the PAO. He will maintain constant liaison with the PAO to provide continuous security guidance. He will, if possible, accompany the PAO, his staff, and news media representatives to the scene of the disaster and be present at all news briefings or conferences. If the security officer cannot be present, he will send a suitable representative.
- c. Disaster Officer. The officer designated as the disaster officer in charge of relief operations at the disaster scene will provide the PAO with assistance in obtaining information for release and in providing access to the disaster scene for media representatives and release at the first opportunity. It is important that this officer provide a continuous flow of pertinent information to the public affairs staff for subsequent release. The containment of a fire, rescue of trapped personnel, removal of all the dead and injured, and so forth are the types of information which must be immediately communicated to the PAO or his representative.
- d. Personnel Officer. The base personnel officer will maintain close liaison with the PAO to facilitate the release of casualty lists according to reference (b). He will immediately inform the PAO when receipts from next of kin notifications have been received. In addition, the personnel officer will provide such personnel services as may be required by the PAO to augment his staff properly with clerical help, escorts, messengers, food handlers, drivers, photographers and personnel to render general assistance. He will also provide officer personnel to act as assistants to the PAO in capacities, such as next of kin information and liaison officer,

Figure 2-3.—Sample command public affairs disaster plan—Continued.

communications liaison officer, administrative assistant and technical information officer.

- e. Communications Officer. The base communications officer will supply the necessary assistance needed to augment the telephone and intercommunications systems in the public affairs office, next of kin hotline or lounge, media information center and at other appropriate locations. Where necessary he will assist the PAO in obtaining additional assistance from commercial communications organizations, such as the telephone company, and so forth. He will assist the PAO in establishing prompt and continuous communication with higher naval authority.
- f. <u>Supply Officer</u>. The base supply officer will assist the PAO with the facilities available to his department. As specified by the PAO, he will supply tables, chairs, typewriters, clerical incidentals, cots, coffee urns and coffee, food as necessary, dishes and implements and other items in the supply inventory which will assist the PAO in fulfilling his responsibilities in the best possible manner.
- g. Transportation Officer. Will provide vehicles necessary to meet the transportation requirements of the PAO in meeting his responsibilities.
- h. All Base Personnel. Other personnel who may be directly or indirectly involved in the disaster are reminded that the PAO is the designated releasing authority for all information concerning the disaster. They should not engage in interviews, volunteer information or otherwise communicate with media representatives except to provide normal courtesies, such as directions or general instructions. If an individual feels he is the holder of information pertinent to the disaster, he should convey that information to the public affairs office or security office for coordination and release. All personnel are further directed to cooperate in any way possible with the PAO to assist him in fulfilling his responsibilities.
- 5. Action. This directive applies to all personnel, military and civilian, attached to this command. Department heads are directed to bring the contents of the directive to the attention of all their personnel and to make it a permanent part of department operational disaster plans. They are further directed to effect immediate and continuing liaison with the PAO in order to prepare detailed lists of requirements commensurate with his responsibilities as specified by this directive.

T. E. HAWK RADM USN

Figure 2-3.—Sample command public affairs disaster plan—Continued.

MEMORANDUM

From: Public Affairs Officer
To: Public Affairs Staff

Subj: PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN THE EVENT OF A NAVAL DISASTER

Ref: (a) Base Directive 5700.1 (Public Affairs Disaster Plan)

1. <u>Background</u>. In accordance with the responsibilities assigned this office by reference (a), the actions outlined in this memorandum will be taken by staff personnel in the event of a naval disaster.

2. General Action to be Taken. When disaster as defined by reference (a) occurs on this base, the public affairs staff must immediately report to their assigned posts. If it is not possible to do so at a reasonable time, you are requested to contact the PAO at your earliest opportunity to report your status (unless you are on authorized leave many miles distant). In the event of a disaster, the public affairs staff may be required to remain close to the office for several days. It is recommended that when you report you bring one change of clothing and basic toilet articles.

3. Specific Assignments.

a. Duty Journalist. This individual stands his watch in the public affairs office and will be notified by the command duty officer of any disaster. He will immediately notify all public affairs staff personnel of the disaster and direct them to report to their posts. After the arrival of the PAO, he will proceed to his assigned post.

- b. Public Affairs Officer. Will proceed to the public affairs office or designated disaster post, and he will then designate a Command Information Bureau (CIB). He will take necessary action to prepare the initial statement reporting the disaster to the media. The first announcement should be cleared by the commanding officer if at all possible. The PAO will be in charge of the CIB for the duration of the disaster period.
- c. Assistant Public Affairs Officer. Will proceed immediately to his/her designated disaster post to ascertain the situation, which he will report to the PAO as soon as possible. Unless otherwise notified by the PAO, he will act as the media liaison officer for the duration of the disaster operation.

Figure 2-4.—Sample public affairs office disaster plan.

- d. Chief Journalist. Will report immediately to the CIB to act as the PAO's administrative assistant. He will take the necessary steps to establish a news media information center in room 794, adjacent to the CIB. This will be for the use of media representatives for the duration of the disaster operation.
- e. First/Second Class Journalist. Report immediately to the CIB. Prepare office equipment (photo lab, typewriters, duplicating machines, etc.) and have other public affairs staff personnel stand by for processing the initial statement. At first opportunity, take necessary steps to establish a next of kin lounge in the Family Service Center for use by next of kin, relatives, fiances, etc., of the personnel involved in the disaster. He will act as the coordinator for the processing and dissemination of the subsequent news releases.
- f. Civilian Secretary. Will report immediately to the CIB and report to the PAO. Primary duties, at least in the initial phases, will consist of establishing telephone contacts with the news media, other base departments and officers and higher authorities—the PAO at Atlantic Fleet Headquarters and the CHINFO duty officer—immediately, and others as directed by the PAO.
- g. <u>Director</u>, <u>Family Service Center</u>. Report immediately to the PAO by telephone. Prepare FSC for continuous information support to military/civilian families. Prepare to operate public hotline for general inquiries concerning the disaster.
- h. Other Personnel. Report immediately to the PAO in the CIB for further assignment.
- 4. In a disaster occurring on this base, the commanding officer and the media will be depending on this office to assume responsibility immediately for the prompt and continuous flow of information. This is an important job, and a big one. Your individual duties are most important to the success of the entire operation.

R. H. MANATEE LCDR USN

Figure 2-4.—Sample public affairs office disaster plan—Continued.

The plan described in figure 2-4 cannot completely detail all the actions to be taken by individual personnel throughout the duration of a disaster. However, it does outline the immediate actions for each member of the staff to take and it assigns general responsibilities to each for the duration of the progression of the disaster. It serves to get everyone started; then it is up to the senior JO and the PAO to adjust their resources and make specific assignments based on the specialized requirements of the disaster.

The checklists, telephone lists and other various informational materials appended to the office plan are the most important to its success. The specific information and manner of presentation will, of course, differ with individual public affairs staffs and commands. The type of data will, however, be much the same anywhere and would include many or all of the following items.

POLICY MATERIALS.— The public affairs staff must have selected policy materials close at hand to facilitate the release of information. Of course, the command plan will be a big help, but the officer in command and other staff officers may want to see specific references authorizing action. These include, but are not limited to, the following items:

- PA Regs, Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual Department of the Navy Information and Personnel Security Program Regulation (OPNAVINST 5510.1 series), The Navy and Marine Corps Disaster Preparedness Manual (OPNAVINST 3440.16 series), Navy Visual Information Management and Operations Manual (OPNAVINST 5290.1 series) and the Manual of the Judge Advocate General. Chapter 8 of PA Regs lists several other references that you should also review.
- Sample releases made in other disasters to illustrate what has been done in the past.
 Statements made by the Chief of Naval Operations in regard to the *Iowa* tragedy or *Midway* fire, for instance, might prove useful.
- Case studies of past disasters containing recommendations for handling disasters. The CHINFO
 Plans and Policy Division keeps on file copies of
 several excellent case studies made on the public
 affairs aspects of past naval disasters.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS.— The bulk of the material appended to the office plan will probably be background information. If it is not possible for you to append all such material physically, a notation should

be made stating where the material is available. Background materials might include the following items:

- Command history.
- Fact sheets on the command and the various ships, aircraft, missiles, and so forth, which might be assigned.
- Biographies and photographs of the CO, XO and C/MC.
- Background information on units likely to be involved in disaster relief activities, such as the fire station and hospital.
- Definitions of naval terms and nomenclature peculiar to your unit or operation.
- Lists of all material in the command of a sensitive nature or which may require special security treatment.
- Biographies of all test pilots (if applicable).
- Fact sheets concerning normal naval activities performed by units which could be involved in a disaster.
- Histories or fact sheets of previous disasters in the command.
- General hometown information on all military personnel.
- One-minute video clips of equipment, aircraft and ships assigned to the command. These are available to commands on request from the Naval Imaging Command in Washington, D.C.
- A current listing of Navy enlisted classifications (NECs) that explains the duties of each Navy enlisted rating.
- Up-to-date statistics concerning personnel, production, and so forth, concerning the command.
- Information on any local materials which might cause anxiety in a disaster, for example, explosives and nuclear materials.
- A list of relief facilities immediately available to next of kin (survivors benefits, death gratuity payment, etc.).

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Several administrative considerations should be addressed when planning the public affairs response to an adverse news situation. These considerations include the formulation of a recall bill, checkoff lists, a comprehensive telephone number listing, the stocking of prepared forms and samples and personnel augmentation.

Recall Bill

Maintaining an up-to-date recall bill with current addresses and telephone numbers of your staff members is critical to your overall chaster preparedness. Update this list at least once per quarter. Additionally, make sure the correct office and home telephone numbers of key PAO staff members are included in the command duty officer notebook or pass-down log.

Checkoff Lists

Checkoff lists can be extremely helpful in a disaster situation. It is impossible to remember every detail when things get confusing. These lists supplement the public affairs staff's memory and should be as detailed as possible. No item is too small to include. They should not, however, be prepared for every conceivable activity. This can lead to further work and confusion for the staff. Checkoff lists might be prepared for the following areas:

- Physical necessities for the CIB and next of kin lounge
- Ground-rule items to be discussed with media representatives
- Experts in various activities of the command
- Official reports that must be filed by the public affairs office

Work sheets are also valuable in the handling of public affairs in a disaster situation. A sample format for a disaster work sheet appears in figure 2-5.

Telephone Numbers

In a disaster situation, the telephone is a major tool for the public affairs staff. Develop a compact but comprehensive list of the people and places you will most certainly contact; include home and business numbers. Give careful attention to this list to make sure it does not become too cumbersome to be useful. Listing all the contacts alphabetically, for instance, may prove frustrating when a number is needed quickly and the name is forgotten. It is better to first divide the list into meaningful categories, which might include the following:

- Personnel assigned to the public affairs office
- News media representatives and stringers
- Strategic base personnel, such as department heads, fire chief, duty officer, officer in charge of the guard posts, and so forth
- Current Directory of Public Affairs Officers, NAVSO P-3068
- Strategic civilian agencies, such as the fire and police departments, Red Cross and civil defense
- Strategic personnel in the chain of command between your command and the highest authority
- Special local individuals, such as telephone company representatives, who can assign radio trucks or assist in obtaining open telephone lines

Prepared Forms and Samples

In all Navy commands there are a number of prescribed forms necessary to obtain certain materials or to accomplish certain tasks. In addition, you may wish to design a number of specialized forms to facilitate speedy action (i.e., format these documents to fill-in-the-blanks on a word processor rather than paper rough drafts). These might include the following:

- Long distance telephone authorizations.
- Blank Joint Message Forms (DD 173/2).
- Query sheets for incoming queries with space for name of caller, return number, organization represented, specific question, time of call, and so forth.
- A fact sheet for outgoing query calls basically designed with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How in mind.
- A sample outgoing message showing its proper routing.
- A sample request for helicopter services.
- Request forms for base transportation.

SERIOUS ACCIDENT OR EMERGENCY WORK SHEET

(name of command)

1.	DateTime				
2.	Nature of accident				
	Fire involved?				
	How serious?				
	Explosion involved?				
	Expected?				
	Nuclear material involved?				
	Continuing danger?				
	Need for evacuation?				
	Should spectators be kept away?				
3.	Location				
	On base/off base?				
4.	Officer in command and/or chief of staff/executive officer notified?				
	By whom?Time				
5.	Public Affairs Officer notified?				
	By whom?Time				
6.	Public Affairs Officer of				
	(next senior authority in chain of command) informed?				
	If done, by whom?Time				
	If not considered necessary, why?				

Figure 2-5.—Sample public affairs office disaster action work sheet.

Name	Iı	Informed?		
By whom?	т	ime		
Name	Iı	Informed?Time		
By whom?	т			
Name		Informed?		
By whom?	ТТ	Time		
PAO representative at scene of accident?				
Name		Time of arrival		
Casualties (if more)			
a. Killed				
	No. 1	No. 2		
(1) Name				
(2) Rank		22.		
(3) Service				
(4) Home				
(5) NOK				
(6) Notified _				
b. Injured				
	No. 1	No. 2		
(1) Name		<u> </u>		
(2) Rank				

Figure 2-5.—Sample public affairs office disaster action work sheet—Continued.

		(3) Service		
		(4) Home		
		(5) NOK		
		(6) Notified		
		(7) Extent of injuries		
	c.	Where have injured been taken? _		
10.	Ma	jor property involved:		
	a.	Government		
		(1) Damage		******
		(2) Identification numbers of airc	craft or vehicles involved:	
	b.	Private		
		(1) Distance to nearest civilian pr	roperty?	**************************************
		(2) Damage	-	
		(3) Owner		
		(Attach additional list if necessary.))	
1.	Ale	rt news media of accident. (Attach	message.)	
		Media Person	Contacted	Time/Date

Figure 2-5.—Sample public affairs office disaster action work sheet—Continued.

	No. 25-	Nama
	Media	Name
13.	Interim release #1 (attached) furnished	
		(time/date)
	Media	Name
4	Y	
4.	Interim release #2 (attached) furnished	(time/date)
	Media	Name
5.	Final release (attached) furnished	
		(time/date)
	Media	Name
16.	Unusual occurrences:	
corre	File made of this checklist, notes of perespondence of importance and any other ance in conduct of future similar situation	material of value for permanent record and/or
18.	Action completed (time/date)	
	(cinned)	

Figure 2-5.—Sample public affairs office disaster action work sheet—Continued.

- Forms on which the PAO may make periodic reports to the officer in command regarding the informational aspects of the disaster, such as total queries received, reporters on the base, releases made, cumulative statistics of public affairs activities and significant events since the last report. These forms permit brief reports to be made as often as necessary.
- Forms on which a chronological listing of events may be kept.
- Sample official letters authorizing media representatives to travel in naval ships and aircraft.
- Blank waiver forms to be signed by media representatives before embarking in Navy ships or aircraft.
- Sample naval messages to ships or remote units requesting disaster information.
- Sample reports to higher authority.
- Forms to facilitate maintaining a log or running description of the public affairs activities to be used later in writing a comprehensive report.
- Media access badges (blank).
- Media parking passed (blank).

Personnel Augmentation

In the event of a major prolonged disaster, the public affairs staff will need additional personnel, perhaps some from outside the command. There must be pertinent information concerning the augmentation of this staff. This list might include the following:

- Reserve public affairs personnel (PAOs, JOs, etc.) in the immediate area who could come on active duty at short notice
- Active-duty public affairs personnel within a certain radius who might supply personnel assistance
- Names of enlisted personnel from other departments in the command particularly well suited to function as messengers, escorts, typists, and so forth
- Names of officers from other departments who might serve in specialized capacities, such as a

- next of kin information officer or an administrative assistant
- Names of photographic personnel with the demonstrated ability to obtain good news photo coverage
- Expects in various specialties who would be called upon to provide technical background information or could be interviewed by media representatives

THE COMMAND INFORMATION BUREAU

The PAO and senior JO should establish a CIB to provide **a single source of information** to reporters. News briefings and releases made from the CIB will reduce inaccuracies and restrict the flow of media to less reliable sources of information. Additionally, security violations can be avoided in having a single source of information that works in concert with Navy officials on scene. Although some CIB provisions are mentioned in this chapter, more detailed information is contained in *The Command Information Bureau*, Chapter 3.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROCEDURES IN NAVAL DISASTERS

Learning Objective: Identify the public affairs procedures taken during a naval disaster.

The most exacting measure of any PAO and senior journalist is likely to center on his handling of an accident story. Your success or failure in such a situation will depend upon your personal ability and competence as well as the competence of your staff, your past record of successor failure in similar situations and the rapport you have with the media. Your credibility and integrity are on the line. Your handling of an adverse news situation reflects on you, the command and the DoD.

RELEASING AUTHORITY

Under any circumstances there is usually a designated authority or specified coordinator for the release of information. Amid disaster, such an authority is mandatory if satisfactory relations are to be maintained with the media and the public. When no one person is recognized as the official spokesman, there is confusion among the press, the relief workers, officials in charge and indeed among the public affairs staff. This should be agreed to and specified in your disaster plan wherever possible.

The reporter without an official, authoritative point of contact has no ready way to distinguish truth from rumor or speculation. In addition, those people involved in the disaster and the personnel taking part in the relief efforts do not know who is receiving and coordinating disaster information for subsequent dissemination. The result is that current and meaningful information which should be continually passed to the press may never be released at all.

The individuals in charge of the relief efforts do not have the time or training to cope with the specialized requirements of the media. When contacted by media representatives, they may become uncooperative or even abusive. This can only make a bad situation that much worse.

A Navy PAO (a captain with more than 20 years of public affairs experience) had vivid memories concerning the crash of a Navy airplane. In regard to a specified releasing authority, he said the following:

"There was a plane crash in a civilian housing area near Philadelphia several years ago. Many civilians were killed in their homes. With the Navy rescue and salvage personnel on the scene were members of the civilian fire department and local police. No one had the authority to release information, assist photographers, and so forth. With no such authority established, the naval officer in charge of the relief efforts prohibited photographers from taking pictures, expelled reporters from the scene and ordered no one to answer questions, thus making the worst possible out of a bad situation."

Incidents on federal property, but outside the fence, pose other unique problems. Your plan should include how the base police/security handle the media if they arrive before the public affairs team.

Normally, the director of the CIB that is established to cope with a particular incident is appointed official spokesman or releasing authority; or, it may be the PAO on the staff of the officer in charge of search, rescue/relief or disaster control operations. In some instances, it will be the PAO on the staff of the naval district commandant within whose jurisdiction the disaster occurs. Release authority can be spelled out in the command disaster plan.

INITIAL ACTIONS

Immediately following an accident or disaster, operational personnel are involved in containment and

control-survivor rescue and treatment, damage control, protection of classified information, and so on. Meanwhile, public affairs staff members obtain the facts to release information as well as consider the establishment of the CIB.

To gather information successfully for release, position members of your staff in the following locations:

- At the command post or emergency crisis control center/CIB of the installation
- At or near the accident scene
- At the public affairs office

In the public affairs office disaster plan shown in figure 2-4, specify that at the first word of a major accident, office staff members report to the assignments made in the Watch, Quarter and Station Bill. Then take five or 10 minutes to locate all of your forms and samples for disaster use and get the office ready. This time will prove to be well spent during the high intensity of answering telephones and writing initial and ensuing reports or statements for the disaster situation. After this is done, instruct them to establish communications with the command post or emergency crisis control center or CIB. Regardless of the location of the accident, communications must be established rapidly between the public affairs representative at the scene of the accident and at the command. This provides the coordination necessary to release information on a timely basis.

Appoint one of your staff members to keep a running log of the following information:

- The time of the accident and a basic description of the occurrence
- Important developments
- The times news releases are issued
- Policy as it was passed to you and how and when you implemented it
- Copies of OPREP-3s, unit SITREPs and other pertinent messages
- Query log that includes Time/Date/Reporter/ Media outlet (see the sample query sheet in Chapter 4)
- Other important information

This will assist you in giving timely and accurate information to the news media and for writing

immediate external releases. Some of this information can also be included in press kits (as in the *Midway* fire) or used in briefings.

THE INITIAL NEWS RELEASE

The initial news release on an accident should give as much information as possible unless the disaster is of such magnitude that information about it is to be released from the seat of government. Remember, after you first receive notification of the accident or incident, you have **one hour** to disseminate the initial news release to the media. **DO NOT** delay the release until more information becomes available or while awaiting the results of an investigation.

The following information, if available, should be contained in the initial news release of an accident:

- The specific type of accident that has occurred
- The location and time of the accident
- The persons involved (subject to requirements on notification of next of kin)
- The places of departure or destination of any vehicles involved (including vessels, aircraft, missiles, etc.)
- The type of equipment involved, unless classified
- The unclassified, pertinent facts about the mission at the time of the accident
- A statement regarding whether a board of inquiry is investigating or will investigate the accident

A release of this kind follows the standard Navy policy of releasing as much information as security considerations permit. Additionally, it provides the news media with information to convey to the general public and discourages rumors.

Never speculate about the cause of an accident or responsibility for the mishap. The standard statement is, "An investigation is being conducted to determine the cause of the accident."

COOPERATING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

Learning Objective: Recognize the Navy's public affairs role in cooperating with news media representatives during a disaster.

The first hours of a disaster are hectic and tiring. The public affairs staff cannot afford to take a break in the critical hours following the initial release. You must gather more information to answer the inevitable questions which will follow. The direct responsibility of the PAO and his staff continues until the interest of the press and public is satisfied.

Mere cooperation by the Navy with the news media will not guarantee sympathetic handling of the facts in an unfortunate situation. News people have a job to do and will do it whether the Navy cooperates or not. While putting the initial release together, let media know you are doing so and find out their deadlines. Try to get the reporters something within their time lines. Being proactive, initiating media contact versus "responding to query," establishes a more credible relationship with the media—especially under negative circumstances.

Cooperation, however, will often result in a more accurate and undistorted picture of the situation. If the facts are presented carefully and candidly as they become available, reporters are more likely to report them objectively. There is also less margin for error and less chance for misinterpretation.

If the Navy refuses to cooperate, reporters have no alternative but to start looking elsewhere for information. In an accident or disaster situation, a reporter will not hesitate to interview any bystander in an effort to get information. But if the reporter knows that the public affairs representative is doing all in his power to cooperate and obtain up-to-the-minute information, he will prefer to wait for authenticated facts. He will prefer to hear the facts presented by an official spokesman or the officer in command.

At the scene of a disaster, reporters are the representatives of the public. Through their eyes, the public learns what has happened, how it happened and the other details that are available. The public's first impression of the situation and the Navy will be made by what they see in print, hear on the radio or watch on television. It is important that these impressions be unbiased and undistorted from the beginning.

Attributes for Dealing with the Media in a Disaster

There are five attributes that contribute to the success of media relations in a disaster situation: accuracy, initiative, honesty, impartiality and good taste.

ACCURACY.—In the turmoil of disaster, there may be many temptations for you to rely on memory or to make educated estimates in answering seemingly inconsequential questions. Reporters may be pressing from all sides for bits of information which must be laboriously checked for accuracy.

An offhand answer to a question, such as, "How many crew members does an airplane like the one that crashed usually carry?" may haunt you for weeks or months. A low estimate might imply the aircraft was permitted to fly with an incomplete crew. An overestimate might excite speculation about a special mission or an overloaded airplane.

No detail is too small to confirm. Checking and rechecking facts in a disaster situation should be standard operating procedure. It could very well spell the difference between success or failure of your whole effort.

In this regard you must resist efforts by the media to force the answer to a question before it has been authenticated. This is particularly difficult when deadlines approach or there is pressure from a reporter who is personally known and trusted. Being stampeded into an answer at a time like this can only result in additional problems. Say you will check and get back to them by a specific time. Whether you have the answer or not, at least give them a status report.

One important aspect of accuracy is the release of the names of disaster victims. A misspelled name, wrong initials, incorrect grade or rate can mean unwarranted anxiety or suffering to the next of kin. An example of this was the crash of a military transport plane several years ago. The public affairs office, in its haste to oblige reporters, released the flight manifest from another aircraft of the same type which was flying a similar mission on the same day. The identification numbers of the aircraft were similar and were not double-checked before they were released. In an attempt to provide quick assistance, a tragic mistake was made.

INITIATIVE.— A good JO anticipates the needs of the news media. Get them the facts, figures and other information they will need before they get a chance to ask for it. When you take this initiative, the following advantages will result:

- It shows you are interested in their problems and want to cooperate.
- It indicates the public affairs staff is ready for such situations when they arise. Reporters appreciate enterprise and resourcefulness

because these qualities are required of them in their own professions.

- It establishes an air of honesty and frankness. They know you are not trying to hide anything.
- It saves time—both yours and theirs. If you provide information as soon as it becomes available, reporters do not have to go out and dig it up themselves. Releasing news promptly also saves you from repeated queries on the same subject.
- It enables the Navy to state its position along with the facts it releases. You have to be careful, however, to avoid the appearance of trying to whitewash the facts.
- It provides alibi copy for the public affairs files.

This is an area where you, as a senior JO, are certain to be of value to your command. Most of the decisions concerning media relations and public affairs policy will be made by the officer in command or PAO—although you may get deeply involved in this if there is no full-time PAO in the command.

But whatever the situation, digging up facts and figures is the JO's job, a job you can embark upon as soon as you get the word that an accident has occurred. Almost any fact your research brings out will help the PAO and the news media.

If you follow the preceding releasing procedure, the job of reading bulletins over the telephone to the media will probably rest on you also. You will do this while the PAO (or director of the CIB) talks to other officers and gets new information and guidance. You can take down any questions you are asked, and either get the answers yourself or refer them to your boss. However, you should never assume the role as spokesman unless specifically designated by the officer-in-charge.

HONESTY.— Honesty in dealing with the media is always of prime importance. The circumstances surrounding a disaster are often negative in connotation and sometimes painful to admit. The only solution, however, is complete honesty and candor.

Overt dishonesty is generally not the problem. Many of the facts are readily available or discernible to the press. The problem of indirect dishonesty is most often encountered. Neglecting to tell the whole story or glossing over certain unsavory facts is dishonest. Failing to tell the news media that the CO of a ship was previously involved in a similar disaster is a form of dishonesty.

Apart from the moral implications of indirect dishonesty is the problem of being caught. Should the media discover dishonesty in a Navy news release, the facts withheld assume new importance. Since they are discovered after the basic stories have been written, they are singled out for individual attention.

IMPARTIALITY.— The Navy cannot expect fair treatment from the news media unless it treats all media equally. Never give information or any advantage to one news medium and withhold it from another. If you allow one reporter access to the scene of a disaster, you must allow similar access to all. This includes newspapers, wire services, radio and television stations and magazines.

Occasionally, when there are too many reporters at the scene of a big story, the Navy must ask them to pool certain information. For example, suppose a dozen reporters request permission to board a ship involved in a major disaster. Although the dead and injured have been evacuated, damage control measures are still in progress. The ship's CO or damage control officer may say that 12 reporters cannot be controlled and might interfere with operations, but he agrees to allow one or two aboard. In this situation, the 12 reporters will be asked to select one or two members of their group to go aboard and pass out the information on a pool basis. If one were a photographer, any photos he took would be distributed to all. Once the pool agreement is made, the reporters concerned are morally bound to share everything they saw, photographed or recorded with all members of the pool.

GOOD TASTE.— News reporters are generally careful about violating the principle of good taste. The news media has its own unwritten standards that are usually adequate to protect the disaster victims or their next of kin. There are no laws against the publication of "horror" photographs or news stories, but each newspaper or television station has its own code of ethics. You cannot take "censorship" actions to keep such information from being taken from the scene of the disaster. You must rely on the usual good taste of the individual media representative.

From the Navy's standpoint, however, you can take action to preserve good taste. This is certainly true in the case of Navy photographers whose pictures will be released to the news media. A few of the things to watch for that would violate good taste include the following:

 Photographs of casualties or their next of kin when they are in a state of shock

- Details of personal conduct of a scandalous nature
- Information that might prejudice the rights of an accused or a party to an investigation before these facts are brought out in open court

While you cannot stop a news reporter from using a story, videotape or photograph you would consider to be in bad taste, you can provide guidance and make sure that he adheres to the ground rules previously agreed upon.

Additional information on media relations can be found in Chapter 4 (Media Relations).

Briefing Reporters

Before briefing reporters at the CIB, you or the PAO should prepare a list of contingency questions and answers to be used to respond to probable news media inquiries. Once the questions and answers (or statements) are approved, the senior public affairs representative at the scene should be given clearance to release it. As stated earlier, release authority can be identified in the command disaster plan.

Media Identification

Include special news media identification badges available for immediate issue in your CIB planning. They may consist of inexpensive plastic badges, arm bands or other similar devices that conform to your command's security badging system. Badges can be prepared in advance, with one or more badges marked and set aside for local newspapers, television and radio stations, and so forth.

Under normal circumstances, base police will call the CIB to request an escort for media representatives at the gate. When they arrive at the CIB, log in the media members and carefully verify their news organization credentials (press cards). Previously prepared lists of local media members are essential during the verification process. As time permits, make random telephone credential checks to non-local news agencies for verification. When issuing the badges, explain that they must carry them at all times while on base and must surrender them before leaving.

Media Ground Rules

When news reporters are permitted access to an accident scene, they and the command should first agree to certain ground rules which must be based on common

sense relative to the special circumstances of the situation. To avoid conflict, you should define the rules before the media is escorted to the accident scene. Although not an all-inclusive list, reporters should be asked to refrain from the following actions:

- Seeking interviews with injured personnel or their distraught next of kin
- Divulging the names of victims until next of kin have been notified regardless of the fact that they obtain the information by their own resources
- Entering restricted areas or areas that contain classified equipment
- Physically disturbing parts of the accident scene before investigators arrive
- Bringing heavy equipment or otherwise cumbersome paraphernalia that might interfere with rescue operations or require additional personnel to carry it
- Seeking interviews with individual rescue workers or the personnel in charge of the operation
- Wandering from the designated access area in search of additional information or photographs

Explain the ground rules to the media members when the media identification badges are issued. The ground rules briefing may also indicate when news briefings are scheduled, how the CIB is configured, how and when they will be brought to the accident site and other information pertinent to the situation.

Admitting Reporters to the Accident Scene

News media always want to send reporters and photographers to the scene of a disaster. To ensure complete and fair coverage, allow access to the scene whenever possible. They cannot, however, be given access when their presence would do the following:

- Interfere with damage control, rescue or evacuation measures
- Jeopardize their own safety
- Violate security

There are no regulations that prohibit reporters from visiting the scene of an accident or disaster simply because it takes place on a military installation. Unless one of the foregoing objections exists, action should be taken to permit entry to the base or installation and to allow them to visit the scene.

Once the reporters are escorted to the scene, they should be given all practicable freedom to move about, take photographs and gather information, as long as they observe the previously set ground rules.

If an accident occurs in the public domain (outside the confines of a military installation), the Navy has no right to prevent reporters or other civilians from going to the scene. This is true even if the area is federal property outside the fence. They may be kept away—that is, kept at a distance—only when their presence may interfere with operations, jeopardize their own safety or possibly violate security. If there is exposed classified information or equipment, the public affairs official at the scene should explain the situation and ask reporters to stay back until the material or equipment can be covered or removed.

The Navy has no right to prohibit the media, or any civilian, for that matter, from taking photographs of an unclassified accident scene in the public domain. There have been several unfortunate situations in the past where cameras and film were forcibly taken from civilians, sometimes at gunpoint. In the public domain, only civilian police have authority. Use them rather than military police or security.

Reporters and photographers must be escorted at all times at the accident or incident scene. They must be controlled to make sure they do not interfere with the efforts of the crisis management team or compromise operational security.

Photography Control at the Accident Site-On Base

As noted earlier, news photographers should be allowed maximum access to an accident scene when all classified material is either covered or removed. But when a member of the media photographs or videotapes classified material on base, either intentionally or by mistake, he must be escorted to the PAO at the scene at once. The PAO must inform the media member of Title 18 U.S. Code 793 (d), 795 and 797, which makes the photography of classified material a violation of federal law.

Following the Title 18 notification, the media member should be asked to surrender the film or videotape voluntarily. If he refuses, the on-scene PAO must escort the individual to the CIB, Either the PAO or the senior journalist at the CIB will then contact the

sponsoring media organization to request the voluntary surrender of the film or videotape. If the news organization refuses, the PAO has no alternative but to confiscate the film or videotape. The photographer should be given a receipt for all items taken. The photographer must not be detained because of the exposed film or videotape.

After the film or videotape is reviewed and all classified portions are removed, the edited film or videotape should be returned to the photographer without delay. Any instance of confiscation of film or videotape from a news media representative must be reported by telephone to CHINFO with a follow-up message.

Photography Control at the Accident Site-Off Base

If the adverse news situation occurs off base, there is a limit as to when film or videotape can be confiscated. Media members must be informed of Title 18 when classified material is present and asked to refrain from photographing or videotaping it. If the media members refuse to observe the ground rules, request the help of civilian law enforcement personnel.

The senior Navy official at the scene must determine whether there is any classified information present. If none is found or if it has been removed or covered, the senior Navy official and the PAO should assist the news media in covering the scene. If it cannot be determined whether classified information is exposed, the senior official or PAO should explain these concerns and tell them photography cannot begin until a preliminary investigation is conducted.

Chapter 8 of *PA Regs* contains detailed information on the control of photography at accident sites both on and off base.

Releasing the Names of Casualties

Learning Objective: Identify the proper release procedures for the names of disaster casualties.

The Navy realizes that the greatest shock a family can receive is to hear on the radio or read in a newspaper that a son, daughter, husband or wife has been killed without first having received official notification from the Navy. Whenever possible, the Navy protects the welfare of Navy families by withholding the names of casualties from news media until official notification is made.

Once the next of kin have been notified, however, the Navy attempts to expedite the release of the names to the news media. This relieves the anxiety of the families of Navy men and women who were not involved in the accident.

For example, assume that there are 100 aviators attached to a naval air station. If one is killed in a local crash and the facts are released without mentioning the pilot's name, the families of **all** the aviators in the area suffer until they learn the name of the victim. After his next of kin are notified, the anxiety of the other families is relieved when the name is released.

To protect the well-being and welfare of families, the Navy adheres to the following policies in releasing the names of casualties to the news media.

MILITARY INSTALLATION - CONUS.— Public release of names of Navy personnel killed or injured may be withheld until the next of kin can reasonably be expected to have received notification. Every effort will be made, however, to release the names concurrently with the announcement of the accident, or as soon afterwards as possible, in order to alleviate undue suspense or anxiety for relatives of other personnel of the unit involved in the accident.

PUBLIC DOMAIN - CONUS.— If an accident occurs off Navy property and Navy personnel are involved, every effort should be made to notify the next of kin before releasing the names of those killed or injured. Reporters at the scene may be able to obtain identification through other means (police reports are publicly available and many coroner's offices reveal names readily), but humanitarian considerations dictate that the next of kin should be notified of the situation before being confronted by the news through the general media. Similar considerations hold true for notifying the next of kin of Navy civilian personnel involved in accidents.

If reporters know the identities of military accident victims and the next of kin have not been notified, the PAO or senior journalist should make a professional appeal to the reporters that they withhold the names until the next of kin have been notified.

OUTSIDE CONUS.— In a unified command area the release of names will be directed by the unified commander. In other overseas areas, the next of kin will be notified before names or photos of casualties are released. In cases of multiple casualties, where the notification of the next of kin must be delayed because of incomplete information or lack of positive identification, the approval of the Chief of Naval

Personnel may be sought for release of a partial list. Accidents occurring outside the United States may require additional coordination with the U.S. embassy or consulate to make sure the host government is properly notified.

MULTISERVICE.— In all joint operations, the joint command PAO is responsible for all public affairs actions regardless if he is of the service that had the accident. Otherwise, if circumstances permit, the parent service of the affected aircraft, vessel or vehicle should make the initial public release. If a Navy representative is not immediately available for comment and certain facts about the accident are obvious, any other service involved may assist reporters who request information. An indication should be made that the information is interim in nature, that the information is confined to the basic known facts, and that an investigation is being made or will be made.

NON-NAVY CIVILIANS.—In a unified command area, action will be directed by the unified commander. In other areas, notification will be made by message or telephone to the authority responsible for coordination of public affairs. If national interest is anticipated, CHINFO will be informed. Appropriate civil authorities also will be informed. Public release of the names of non-Navy civilian casualties is at the discretion of the command concerned. If it is considered advisable to release this information before the next of kin have been notified, a statement on the status of this notification should be included in the release.

AUTHORITATIVE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The equipment involved in naval disasters is often highly technical. The circumstances surrounding a collision at sea or aircraft accident are usually unfamiliar to the layman.

To report the facts in context, it is important that the media fully understand what has happened. Such understanding may also help them to be sympathetic in their reporting of why it happened.

Technical manuals usually seem confusing and unnecessarily detailed to the uninitiated. The public affairs staff, in many cases, cannot explain technicalities or specialized operations. An attempt to do so, without thorough knowledge, can only lead to additional confusion.

Soon after the initial announcement concerning the loss of a nuclear submarine, the Navy made certain

technical experts available to answer specialized questions concerning submarine operations. One of these was the former CO of a nuclear submarine. This officer, who himself had taken a nuclear submarine under the arctic ice fields, spent several hours providing background information to the Pentagon press corps. He also appeared in a number of televised interviews. While being careful to avoid speculation as to the cause of the disaster, he did provide enough technical data to enable stories to be written accurately. He was also able to dispel a number of unfounded stories and rumors which circulated soon after the sinking. One Pentagon news reporter remarked that these briefings contributed greatly to the excellent public relations associated with the disaster.

Background information which may seem to be remote or "too much trouble" in the hectic hours following a disaster may be the most important in the long run.

DEBRIEFING SURVIVORS

On several occasions, it has been noted that disaster survivors were interviewed by the news media without having been debriefed by the PAO or an assistant from his staff. Debriefing is a private meeting at which the survivors are interviewed to determine their experiences and counsel them about their upcoming meeting with reporters. Other cognizant personnel must also be present to offer specific guidance. Debriefing may not be possible when reporters are taken to the disaster scene, but a knowledgeable escort can help the reporter to keep information obtained from interviews in context. Individuals in the midst of a disaster often do not know the full story of what has happened. They sometimes tend to generalize statements based on their own experiences in isolated areas of the disaster.

In an operational disaster the survivors may not know exactly what can be said about the work in which they were engaged. One result is that they refuse to answer any questions and therefore become "uncooperative," calling unnecessary attention to the classified circumstances surrounding the accident. There is also the possibility of a survivor performing his own security review based on an incomplete knowledge of the disaster or operation.

Certain survivors may be disgruntled about the operation or the ship and attempt to place blame on faulty equipment, poor leadership, long hours, and so forth. The reporters, who have no way of knowing the reliability of the person, use exactly what they are told.

Other survivors may deeply resent prying eyes and vent their feelings on the media representatives.

In one notable incident, the crew of a Navy airplane that had been attacked over international waters was made available before they could be debriefed by the PAO. Unfortunately, many officials at the news conference did not know the specific details concerning the mission of the aircraft or the type of equipment it carried. Rather than disclose that the aircraft carried special equipment in the spaces normally accommodating weapons, a crewman stated that the weapons had been removed because "spree parts" were not available. This was a cover statement that backfired all the way to the U.S. Congress. To the crewman questioned, this seemed the best thing to say at the time. Navy officials agreed afterwards that a few minutes to debrief the crew privately would have been time well spent.

THE PAO AND NAVY INVESTIGATIONS

Learning Objective: *Identify the role of the PAO and senior journalist in Navy investigations.*

The Navy uses different types of investigations for different circumstances. The most common is the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Manual investigation. These are administrative, fact-finding investigations to search out, assemble, analyze and record all available information about a particular matter. Their primary purpose is to give convening and reviewing authorities adequate information on which to base decisions. "JAGMans" are purely advisory in nature and are often convened in cases of vehicle accidents, loss of government property, or in cases of injury or death to service members.

Accuracy is an important reason to withhold information about an investigation until it is complete. At any point as the investigation proceeds up the chain, it can be sent back for further work. This could change earlier decisions if new information is found.

Investigation information may also be used in legal proceedings. Therefore, it is important to protect the rights of individuals and not to prejudice the outcome of the case in court.

While PAOs and senior JOs are constrained from releasing information on an investigation before its completion and review, they should be notified when an investigation is ordered. Do not assume this will happen. You must check and double check for such information. Every person involved in the incident is interviewed, and this increases the likelihood of leaks to the media.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS ACTIONS

Public affairs, legal and investigative officers must work closely to assemble an extensive public affairs package addressing the investigation findings before they are released.

In many cases, there has already been media coverage of the event before an investigation is under way. Media may try to get information beyond what is available from your office.

Families have become a leading source of information for the media, especially if they think the Navy has done something wrong or is hiding something. An example is an incident involving a young petty officer who was mysteriously lost at sea during a supply audit. The CO telephoned the parents from overseas, trying to be as candid and conciliatory as possible. Unfortunately, his call was made before the investigation into the incident was complete. Virtually every word he spoke made the evening news, and later when the family received the final investigative results, every piece of information that appeared to contradict his early statements was highlighted by the media.

In most cases, media must file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to get a copy of investigative results. Even then, they will get an edited version because personal information on witnesses is protected under the Privacy Act. In stories with significant public interest, a cleared edited copy of the investigative results is made ready and released upon request when the findings are announced. This was the case in the release of the investigative results of the fire on the USS *Bonefish* (SS 582) and the USS *Iowa* explosion.

DIFFERENCES IN REPORTS

The investigative report provided to the families normally contains more information, such as autopsy reports, than that released to the media. The report is given to them before any public release is made and you should know exactly when the families get their copies. You should also make them aware of the differences between reports released to families and those released to reporters. Families are also unofficial and often uncontrollable "releasing authorities."

There are exceptions to the rule. Sometimes when extremely damaging and inaccurate information is leaked to the media, it becomes necessary to release a small portion of an investigation to calm public fears. During the *Iowa* investigation, a leak alleged that many

of the sailors killed were using drugs. Autopsies revealed no trace of drugs in any of the sailors, and a decision was made to release that information.

As the senior journalist, you must be an active participant in the entire investigative process, from the initial press release to the final release of the investigative report. Building a solid working relationship with legal officers and investigators before a crisis means better planning, fewer surprises and accurate information for the public.

NEXT OF KIN

Learning Objective: Recognize the procedures for dealing with next of kin during a disaster.

The Navy is just as interested in the welfare of the families of Navy men and women as it is in the welfare of Navy personnel. When a disaster occurs, the next of kin suffer emotional anguish and pain almost equal to the physical suffering of those in the disaster. These people must be protected.

There are a number of ways the public affairs office can help ease the suffering of the next of kin. One way is to handle the release of news competently. This includes the prompt release of information as it becomes available, particularly the names of casualties, to ease the anxiety of families whose loved ones were not involved.

Many of the next of kin live near the base or the home port of a ship involved in the disaster. When the first news of the disaster reaches them, they converge on the base to be near the source of information. Provisions must be made for them. They should never be left to their own resources or permitted to wait outside the gate for second-hand information.

Guidelines for handling the next of kin should be specified in the disaster plan.

PAO/CACO RELATIONSHIP

Whenever possible, the PAO and senior journalist should coordinate the release of information on injured and killed Navy personnel with the casualty assistance calls officer (CACO). The CACO works under the direction of the Navy Casualty Assistance Calls Program (CACP), NAVMILPERSCOMINST 1770 series. The broad purpose of the program is to assure the next of kin of the following:

• The Navy's interest in their well-being.

- The Navy's concern in the case of members reported missing while the search for him/her is under way.
- The Navy's sympathy in their loss in the case of a death.
- The Navy's efforts to help the survivors adjust to the new conditions the tragic circumstances have imposed upon them.

As the senior journalist assisting the PAO, you can do a great deal to support the CACO assigned to a casualty that has drawn media attention. By establishing a practical CACO/PAO relationship and incorporating advance planning, media coverage can be handled in a manner that preserves the dignity of the event.

Let us say, for example, that a BM2 is killed at sea and is credited with saving the lives of several of his shipmates. The sailor's remains are scheduled to arrive at the local civilian airport.

One of the first events that will require on-scene support will be the arrival of the remains at the airport. If media coverage is anticipated, family desires regarding media interaction and presence as well as the PAO's recommendations for media interaction should be addressed early through the CACO.

Once family desires are known, planning should begin immediately and the PAO should contact airport public relations or associated officials. If standard procedures are not in place, they should be discussed well before an actual event. Learning about the organization of the airport and developing contacts will help when a high-media interest event is imminent.

Other items that should be discussed with the CACO include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Presence of a media coverage plan. Is there a media coverage plan designed for the arrival of the remains? If a family requests no media presence, what procedures are followed? If a coverage plan is not in place, what must be done and who should be contacted to workout a plan?
- Coverage location, timing and logistics. Where and when should the media meet the Navy or airport public affairs escorts? How will the media get to the coverage site? Can the airport provide transportation? Can an adjacent arrival gate or cargo area be cleared during the arrival and transfer of the remains?

- Casket preparation before family, media or public viewing. Caskets being moved by commercial aircraft are normally placed in a protective shipping container made of heavy cardboard or similar material (with a wood or particleboard bottom) by the Navy-contracted mortuary. This outer protective material must be removed before family, media or public viewing. Not doing so will result in media photos of a crated casket being taken out of an airplane, creating an image of a fallen shipmate coming home in a "cardboard box." With the assistance of the CACO, determine who is removing the outer material and when, who is draping the casket, and so forth.
- Family member presence at the arrival of the remains. If family members are going to be present when the remains arrive, what is the procedure to escort them to the arrival site?
- **Support personnel.** Where will the honor guard be positioned before and after arrival? Is there a special provision to expedite getting the escort off the arriving aircraft and down to the honors site?

Be ready to give recommendations to the CACO on anticipated media interest and interaction and the church and graveside services so the family can be briefed, consulted and appropriate actions taken. One of the first steps is making an advance visit to the church, funeral home and cemetery. Some items to ask about during the advance visit include the following:

- **Inside.** What is the church's policy on media coverage of services and the recommended media location?
- Outside. Where can the media be positioned to get arrival and departure photos of the remains, family and mourners with minimum disruption? What time will the remains arrive at the church? What is the route to the cemetery and how long will it take? What is the approximate start and end time of the graveside service?
- Where is the burial site? Once the site is identified, select an adjacent location relative to the sun at a distance favorable for media coverage. Rope off the area in advance. Consider parking areas and entrance/exit locations for the media and PAO escorts.

Although these guidelines are based on a specific scenario, they can be easily modified to fit your individual needs. For more detailed information, consult NAVMILPERSCOMINST 1770 (series).

NAVY FAMILY SUPPORT

Before a disaster strikes, the PAO should meet with all command family groups to be sure they understand the organization of the command and the ways they can obtain information in a crisis. Commands may use "telephone trees" and liaison with the ombudsman to ensure a timely and accurate internal information flow. It will also assist Navy families in dealing with the intrusions into their privacy by the news media. The ombudsman network should include the following:

- Sponsor's unit
- Family Service Center
- Unit's type commander
- Local PAO

During a disaster, the PAO or senior journalist channels accurate information through the chain of command to the families as quickly as possible, using the ombudsman network previously described. It is a race to inform the families before the media does. The media may report highly inaccurate information in a crisis, so it is better that the families learn about it through their telephone network or even in specially called meetings.

You and the PAO may also use the external media to inform your internal audience during a crisis. For example, the establishment of a special information "hot line" at the CIB or Family Service Center can be reported by the news media to assure wide distribution to dependents and other family members. When there is an accident involving casualties, the Bureau of Naval Personnel Emergency Communications Center (ECC) at the Navy Annex in Arlington, Viginia, contacts news networks to request they publicize their emergency hot line numbers. Obtain these numbers from BUPERS and release them to the local media as well.

NAVY FAMILIES AND THE MEDIA

The Navy's policy is to protect the privacy of its personnel and family members, especially in times of crisis. While it is the right of every American to talk to the news media if they desire, Navy family members should never feel pressured into giving an interview. If a Navy family member is contemplating a media interview, the PAO and senior journalist should offer advice and help before a final decision is made.

Convey the following points to the family member:

- It is ok to say no. The family member is not required to grant a news media interview request. When an interview request is granted, the right to privacy is relinquished and the individual may be harassed by other reporters or the general public.
- Be mindful of the situation. Care must be taken if the family member decides to talk to a reporter. Topics, such as personal experiences (emotions, reactions, etc.), are permissible, but internal privileged command information (such as the ship's scheduled port visits), command policy, hypothetical situations or speculation on the cause of the accident or incident must be avoided. The individual must avoid repeating stories or rumors and refrain from offering an opinion on how something could have been done differently.
- Do not reveal the surname. Tell the family member that he or she may grant the interview only if the reporter agrees to omit the surname. This can prevent crank calls and maintain family security.
- The family member's safety and security comes first. The individual does not owe the news media any details about his or her life.

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE

Learning Objective: Recognize the planning aspects with regard to a memorial service.

A memorial service involves military participation but <u>not</u> full military honors. It is generally held for deceased members whose remains are not recoverable. However, when a command suffers a tragedy and the remains are recoverable, it may elect to conduct a memorial service so family, shipmates and friends can pay their respects. This is primarily done to preserve the privacy of the funeral. The memorial service can be as modest as a gathering on a destroyer's fantail or occupy a large aircraft hangar at a naval air station.

For example, a main space fire claimed the lives of six sailors aboard the USS *White Plains* (AFS 4) several years ago while the ship was conducting operations in the South China Sea. A memorial service was held at Naval Air Station Alameda to coincide with the arrival of the members' remains in the United States (the ship was home ported in Guam at the time of the fire). To accommodate the many family, friends and service

members attending, the ceremony was held inside an aircraft hangar specially converted for the occasion.

WRITTEN PLAN

Every good plan must be committed to paper, and the memorial service plan is no exception. Following one or two meetings with the organizers and participants of the service, the finished plan should detail the responsibilities of those involved and include the schedule of events and a diagram of the area. For maximum effectiveness, the plan should be distributed commandwide as a notice.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of those involved might look something like the following:

- Officer-in-charge: The overall coordinator for the memorial service plan and the schedule of events. This individual is usually a senior officer in the command, but the CO may designate the PAO to be the officer-in-charge, regardless of rank. Ensures color guard, honor guard, escorts and pall bearers (if applicable) are properly briefed, trained and inspected before the ceremony. Arranges separate waiting/assembly areas for military officials and family members; provides podium, public address system and chairs; ensures medical personnel are on standby at the ceremony; briefs security personnel on the time, date and location of the ceremony and requests "free" entry for personnel attending.
- Senior Chaplain: Provides details for the memorial service schedule; coordinates the preparation and distribution of programs with the PAO; assigns one chaplain to each family (in the event of more than one death); meets and escorts family members to the waiting area and ceremony.
- PAO or Senior Journalist: Provides media advisory and naval message announcing the ceremony; produces the media coverage plan (similar to the one described in the "PAO/CACO Relationship" section); provides press assistance to families as required; briefs courtesy CACOs; produces the press release and disseminates it to the media; arranges video recordings and still photos of the ceremony; coordinates musical selections with the Navy Band (if applicable); prepares the ceremony program and ensures the

- escort officers have an adequate amount for distribution.
- CACO: Assigns courtesy CACOs and escorts by message; coordinates all necessary arrangements for hearses, gurneys, coffin flags, and so forth (if applicable).
- Personnel/Legal Officers: Assists the officerin-charge as needed.

Further information on memorial services/funerals may be obtained in Module I of the *Religious Program Specialist 3 & 2* training manual and in *Navy Military Funerals*, NAVPERS 15555B.